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SUBJECT: UNMIS SRSG Qazi Reportedly Plans to Depart Sudan

CLASSIFIED BY: REWhitehead, CDA, State, EXEC; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (sbu) Derek Plumbly, Chairman of the Assessment and Evaluation Commission, on February 1 informed Commission members that he had just met with Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) Ashraff Qazi, who has directed the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) since the expulsion of first SRSG Jan Pronk. Qazi told Plumbly that he planned to debrief the resident diplomatic corps on February 3 and definitively depart Sudan the following day so that his recently-named successor, Haile Menkerios, can take up the position at once. Until last week, Qazi was expected to remain in place through the April National Elections. Menkerios will reportedly arrive in early March.

¶2. (c) With the arrival last week of Joint SRSG Ibrahim Gambari to take over the reins of the United Nations and African Union Mission to Darfur (UNAMID), and Menkerios' anticipated arrival, there are hopes that the sister UN peacekeeping missions will play a more robust role as Sudan moves into the crucial final year of implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, concluding with the Southern Sudanese and Abyei referenda for self-determination in January 2011. Qazi had an often thorny relationship with the Government of Southern Sudan, which at one point threatened to sever all contact with him. There are questions about how much time Menkerios, who is rumored to be intent on holding on to his current position as UN Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs, will spend in Sudan. Gambari, who immediately traveled to El Fasher in Darfur and announced his intention to spend most of his time there, replaced Rudolphe Adada, who during much of his tenure was an absentee landlord.
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